



# Fayetteville VA Medical Center *Community Update*

Vol. 2 No. 4

Items of interest for our stakeholders

April 2011

## VA/Army partner to increase women Veterans services

Thanks to a partnership with the Fort Bragg's Womack Army Medical Center, women Veterans now have access to services that weren't available in the Fayetteville VAMC less than a year ago.

Dr. Mark Griffo, a FVAMC gynecologist, spearheaded the efforts that now allow him to perform surgical procedures at the Army facility that currently can't be done in-house due to the surgical complexity level at the VA facility. Before the resource sharing agreement was formalized, women Veterans would have been sent to other providers in the community on a fee-basis.

Griffo, who at one point taught pelvic and laparoscopic surgery at the University of Missouri and was in private practice before coming to the VA, said the new arrangement is a win-win situation for both the VA and the Army.

"(Womack is) a teaching hospital. They have residents on staff and they're working to get a gynecology resident program," Griffo said. "We win because there's no fee basis and we get to see our patients at Womack. They win because we get to teach their residents some of the surgical procedures."

While he isn't doing a wide variety of surgeries at this point, Griffo said he hopes to change that in the near future, just as the variety of treatment options for women is increasing at the FVAMC itself. Between new medical equipment and the new Women's Health Pavilion currently under construction here, the doctor said it's obvious that the VA is placing an emphasis on one of the fastest growing VA population – women Veterans.

From January 2009 to January 2011, the number of Veterans enrolled for their health care needs at the FVAMC increased by 9.1 percent. In that same time frame, the number of enrolled women Veterans increased by 18.2 percent. Of the more than 47,000 Veterans enrolled at Fayetteville, more than 5,000 are women, and that number is expected to increase just as the number of women in the military has increased to the point that almost 14 percent of those on active duty are women while 18 percent of Guard and Reserve members are women.

While the surgical agreement with Womack is exciting, there are things happening in-house that show that the VA is no longer a "Boys Club," which is a stereotype many people have. A new and expanded Women's Health Pavilion is currently under construction at the facility, and among new equipment acquisitions, Griffo now uses a urodynamic machine in the women's clinic.



**Dr. Mark Griffo, Fayetteville VA Medical Center gynecologist, prepares a urodynamic machine for a test session at the medical center's Women Veterans Health Clinic. The machine is used to help in the diagnosis and treatment of incontinence in women, and is the only one of its kind in use in the Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network.** *Photo by Ed Drohan*

He's been told that this diagnostic tool is the only one of its kind in the Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network. The machine is used to help determine what is happening when a woman is suffering from incontinence, a fairly common problem that can have multiple causes. A 20-minute exam using the new machine can help the physician determine the proper treatment for each pa-

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# Partners

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tient, since treating the wrong cause can make the problem worse instead of better, Griffo said.

He's also using a new piece of equipment that can help women avoid a hysterectomy in some cases, as well as equipment that helps him treat women who have abnormal pap smears.

The overall goal, Griffo explained, is to work toward making the Fayetteville VAMC a Center of Excellence for Women's Health, a goal that has the full backing of Medical Center Director Elizabeth Goolsby.

"You have to realize that by shooting to make us a Center of Excellence for Women's Health, it helps the entire system," Griffo explained. "That's because they look at the entire system, for instance how long it might take to get an ENT appointment. If we're improving the system for women, we're improving it for everybody.

"If we bring up the operating room so we can do other surgeries for women, we'll also be bringing it up so we can do other surgeries for men as well."

So far, Griffo said, the women he sees during his practice have been happy with the changes they've seen in the VA, but he feels there's more that can be done.

"I'm really excited about what we've started doing here and how we've progressed. The director is behind us and I think we're going to get somewhere," Griffo said. "As we work to be a center of excellence, I want the Fayetteville VAMC to be a provider of choice for the community, someplace they want to come for their care because they know they'll get the best care possible."

## FVAMC takes gold in patient safety

The Fayetteville VAMC recently received the RCA Cornerstone Gold Award for patient safety.

This is the first time the center has received the award, which is presented by the VA's National Center for Patient Safety. The gold award is the highest of three levels presented by VA.

The award is presented for exceeding gold level standards in conducting root cause analyses (RCAs), a standard process of looking at issues that have the potential to do harm and finding ways to avoid those issues in the future, said Patient Safety Manager Susie Willis.

Another way to put it is that the center receiving the award has gone above and beyond in identifying potential problems and coming up with valid solutions.

During an RCA, a team looks at the issue or event from a system perspective, Willis said.

They look at what was done right, what was done wrong, and then come up with suggested solutions that will help prevent the problem from happening again.

While a medical center must do at least eight RCAs during the fiscal year to even qualify for the award, the FVAMC actually conducted 10 individual and three aggregate RCAs. Individual analyses relate to individual events — something like a medication error that providers feel is significant enough to receive individual attention — while aggregate analyses look at all similar events that took place over a one-year time frame.

issues, and missing and eloped patients. To be considered for the award, they must also complete at least five individual RCAs.

Another requirement is for the recommendations of those RCAs to have intermediate or strong actions associated with them to ensure the corrective actions have a good chance of correcting problems. All of those completed at the FVAMC included strong actions, Willis explained.

In Fayetteville, an RCA team usually consists of Willis and at least three other hospital staff members who are not associated with the event or issue being studied.

They look at all aspects of the event, interview those who were involved and then develop an action plan. The team has a maximum of 45 days from the date the medical center became aware of the problem to the date the medical center leadership approves their recommendations.

Another aspect of the RCA is that it does not assign fault to encourage open participation and discussion. If the team determines the problem is with something other than the system — something that could require disciplinary actions for example — they pass that along to the facility leadership team, but the board or supervisor responsible for those actions must gather their own information in order to draw their own conclusions.

The award is another feather in the cap for the FVAMC, the center director said.

"We are here to provide safe, first class care for our Veterans, and it's a mission we take very seriously," FVAMC Director Elizabeth Goolsby said. "This award is just recognition for what we've known all along — we have some of the finest employees in the VA, and they are committed to providing that care for our nation's heroes."

Medical centers are required to have three aggregate RCAs each year to study patient falls, medication

**Community Update** is published monthly. The contents provide readers with information on programs and happenings at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center.

If you have questions or comments about the newsletter, email [edward.drohan@va.gov](mailto:edward.drohan@va.gov) or call (910) 488-2120, ext. 5991.

<b>Elizabeth Goolsby</b>	Director
<b>James Galkowski</b>	Associate Director
<b>Joyce Alexander-Hines</b>	Associate Director, Patient Care Service
<b>Dr. Anna Teague</b>	Interim Chief of Staff
<b>Ed Drohan</b>	Public Affairs Officer/Editor



# Navy volunteers bring garden to life

It may be unusual to see Sailors on an Army post, but one group is trying to let Fayetteville know they're here by volunteering in the community – including recently completing a project that will benefit Fayetteville VAMC Community Living Center residents.

More than 40 Fort Bragg Sailors and their family members recently took on a job March 26 and 27 that had been on the medical center's wish list for some time – creating a raised garden in the hospital's Geriatric Park area. The garden can be

The garden was built in three sections to allow it to follow one of the park's paths. It is designed to allow residents in wheelchairs to easily reach the topsoil in the raised garden so they can plant seeds and work their section of the garden more easily than they had done with pots on tables in the past.

"We found that when residents were growing things in pots, it was difficult for them to reach some-

times" said Norma Fraser, Fayetteville VAMC's chief of Voluntary Service. "We'd looked into the idea of a raised garden but didn't know how to do it. Then (the volunteers) come along and supply all the ideas and the manpower."

Chief Petty Officer Jerome Kusy said it took about a month to work out the garden's design after talking with Fraser. He came out to the hospital several times to look over the area so he could refine the plans before actual construction started.

With materials purchased by the medical center with donated funds, the volunteers set to work on a cold and dreary Saturday. After a pizza lunch donated by the Fa-



**Fort Bragg Sailors put the finishing touches on the Geriatric Park raised garden.**



**Sailors and their families assigned to Fort Bragg work together March 26 to build sections of what would eventually become a raised garden in the medical center's Geriatric Park.**

*Photos by Ed Drohan*

used by CLC residents in wheelchairs to grow their own flowers and vegetables as part of a plant therapy program. Some also volunteered with their children to clean up a local cemetery across the street from the hospital as well as the hospital grounds.

The volunteers, all members of the First Class Association and the Chief's Mess, have been volunteering monthly with other community organizations and decided that working with the VA medical center made perfect sense.

"This is close to our hearts as military members, being able to give back to others who have served," said Senior Chief Petty Officer Blake Schimmel, one of the project's organizers. "I think this is a good thing for them."



**The finished project, ready for Community Living Center residents to start planting their gardens as part of their therapy program.**

ayetteville Elks Club, they made good progress, hoping to complete work before a forecast rain storm, but even as the rain started coming down, the work continued until a new raised garden was in place. Volunteers returned Sunday to complete the work and fill the garden with topsoil so it would be ready as soon as CLC residents are ready to begin planting.

Fayetteville VAMC Director Elizabeth Goolsby came out to personally thank each of the volunteers and presented them with medical center coins in appreciation for their work.

"This is something special,"

Goolsby said. "This is going to mean so much for our residents."

Kusy agreed.

"This will give them something to get them out and use their hands so they can see something grow instead of being in a hospital setting all the time," Kusy said. "It also lets them know that the younger service members haven't forgotten them."

**For information on volunteering, contact Norma Fraser at (910) 822-7027.**

# Voluntary visitor restriction lifted as flu cases drop

Visitors under 18 are welcome at the Fayetteville VA Medical Center and Community Based Outpatient Clinics again as the number of flu cases in the region has fallen.

In early February, the Fayetteville VAMC asked that people under 18 not visit the medical center if at all possible. That request has been rescinded.

Medical center officials are still asking that anybody suffering from flu-like symptoms avoid the medical center unless they were being seen here as a patient.

The percentage of people in the region reporting influenza like illness (ILI) fell from a high of 6 percent to 2.5 percent now. Emergency Room cases of ILI have fallen from 26-48 cases during the first three weeks of

February to 14-16 cases per week. The last case of influenza at the medical center that was confirmed by lab reports was reported on Feb. 18. Influenza cases in North Carolina are now considered sporadic rather than widespread.

While the number of ILI cases in the region has declined, health officials still recommend that people follow some basic guidelines to help prevent the spread of flu and other illnesses:

- Wash hands with warm water and soap, or use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available;
- Cover coughs and sneezes. Use a tissue or your upper sleeve, and put the used tissue in the wastebasket; and
- Limit your contact with the general public if you are sick.

## ***Congratulations to Fayetteville VAMC's LeShonda Wallace!***

Her application "*Influenza Prevention Initiative and Programs for Women Veterans*" has been selected for the 2011 Public Health/Pandemic Influenza Grant Award Program by the Public Health Strategic Health Care Group (PHSHG). This program is intended to encourage the development of education and prevention materials, and programs related to public health and pandemic influenza concerns.

# April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Did you know that April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month?

About one in five women and one in a hundred men seen in VA medical facilities report that they experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST); that is, sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment that occurred during military service.

MST can affect veterans' physical and

mental health many years afterwards.

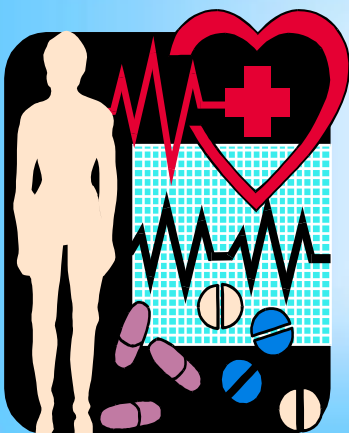
VA offers a variety of services designed to assist veterans who have experienced MST. For example, treatment for physical and mental health conditions related to MST is available at every VA facility and is provided to veterans free of charge, regardless of service-connection status. Veterans may be able to receive this free MST-related care even if they are not eli-

gible for other VA care.

Every VA facility also has an MST Coordinator who serves as a point of contact for veterans and staff.

For more information, contact your facility's MST Coordinator or visit the MST Resource homepage at <http://yawww.mst.va.gov>. Veterans can access information at <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp>.

# Health Fair



**Health Information, Free Stuff,  
Door Prizes**

***Thursday, April 11, 2011***

***10 a.m.-1 p.m.***

***FVAMC 3rd Floor Auditorium***

**Patients, Employees and Volunteers are Invited**

*Employees are eligible for 1 hour toward their 40 hours of continuing education*



# Earth Day Celebration

April 19, 2011  
Fayetteville VAMC  
Auditorium  
10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

POC: Shelley Reeder  
(910) 488-2120 X5699

Don't forget to bring your old cell phones for donating to **CELL PHONES FOR SOLDIERS**



## What else will be there?

- Test your GEMS Green Knowledge to win great prizes!
- Learn about recycling at the VA and pick up a recycling bin
- NCSU Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners
- NC Dept of Environment & Natural Resources – Air Quality
- Sustainable Sandhills
- Visit our Energy Corner
- Learn how we are reducing our environmental footprint
- See our projects that save energy & conserve water
- Pick up a "Fat Trapper"
- Other exhibits & displays
- Door prizes , live plants and eco-friendly free stuff!

And much more...So come and join us! Let's **GO GREEN!**

POC: Shelley Reeder, GEMS Coordinator X5699

Green Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) Coordinator

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Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century